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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 19, 2002

State sets fact-finding hearing on med-mal insurance market

FRANKFORT, Ky. - The Kentucky Department of Insurance will hold a public hearing on Friday, July 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Capital Plaza, 405 Wilkinson Blvd., in Frankfort to hear testimony on the availability and affordability of medical malpractice insurance in the state.

Medical malpractice insurance is liability coverage that insures hospitals, physicians and other health-care professionals against claims alleging negligence or errors resulting in harm to a patient.

"We began researching this issue last fall after receiving calls and letters from Kentucky doctors concerned about the market," said Commissioner Janie A. Miller. "The hearing will enable us to get feedback from all parties involved and interested in the medical malpractice insurance industry, including legislators, insurance companies, brokers and agents, providers, organizations like the Kentucky Academy of Trial Attorneys, and members of the public."

An informal survey conducted in October 2001 by DOI showed that the market is tightening up in Kentucky, as it is across the nation. There are fewer carriers to write coverage and premiums continue to rise. The July hearing is a continuation of DOI's efforts to determine if the market is adequately serving all geographic areas of the state and all classes of providers.

"Our ultimate goals are to strengthen the market and encourage new carriers to come to Kentucky," said Commissioner Miller. "Realizing that the Insurance Code will limit our authority in some instances, we intend to gather all of the information from the hearing and determine what options we have."

People wishing to testify are asked to sign up before the hearing. Written comments may be submitted at the hearing or mailed to Commissioner Miller at the Department of Insurance, P.O. Box 517, Frankfort KY 40602-0517. Written comments should be received by DOI before close of business on the hearing date.

The hearing location is accessible to people with handicaps. If you have a disability and need special services to participate in the hearing, call toll-free 1-800-595-6053. The TTY line for the deaf or hard-of-hearing is 1-800-462-2081.